

For Immediate Release: March 25, 2016  
Contact Person: Sheriff Jamie Patton  
(937)-645-4125

## ***Sheriff Reflects on Staffing Situation at the Sheriff's Office***

Union County Sheriff Jamie Patton is very passionate about serving and protecting the people of Union County. He has dedicated his life to serving others as a law enforcement officer, and since 1991, has worked and lived in Union County. He is also passionate about the safety of his staff and the service level they provide. Never before has so much been asked of law enforcement officers across the nation and not since the days of the Wild West, has the job of law enforcement been more dangerous. Taking all this into consideration, he is very concerned about the current staffing situation at the Sheriff's Office. "I've used the analogy a lot lately that the Sheriff's Office is the big black hole. When someone is in need and they have nowhere else to turn, they call us. We are the only county office that operates twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty five days a year. We never close our doors, we never take a day off, and we cannot pass calls off to other agencies", said Patton. Union County is the third fastest growing county in the State of Ohio, which results in more residents, more businesses, more crime, and more calls for service as a result of all this growth. Since the first of the year, he has fielded many questions from community members, business owners, and elected officials about a misleading statement that was printed in the December 28, 2015 edition of the *Marysville Journal Tribune*. The article (County budget sees slight bump for 2016) said the Sheriff's Office was fully staffed. This was not a true statement. There are times, which are more and more frequent, that we have to "stack" non-emergency calls. This means we have to tell citizens to wait until a deputy is available for them to file a report or speak with them in person. There are days when our deputy's drive from call to call to call, because we do not have enough manpower to handle the work load. The volume of calls and the length of time it takes deputies to investigate certain calls have resulted in much less proactive enforcement. Traffic complaints continue to come in, but often times, we cannot work them aggressively. As a result, people continue to drive aggressively and with distractions such as texting. We believe this has resulted in more injury and fatal crashes in the past few years. It's a fact that a certain percentage of crime that is committed in Union County is directly related to the drug problem in our community. "I know that in the past when I was an investigator, Union County had a reputation for being tough on crime. The criminals would tell us that if they didn't have to come to Union County, they wouldn't, because of the proactive law enforcement approach", commented Patton.

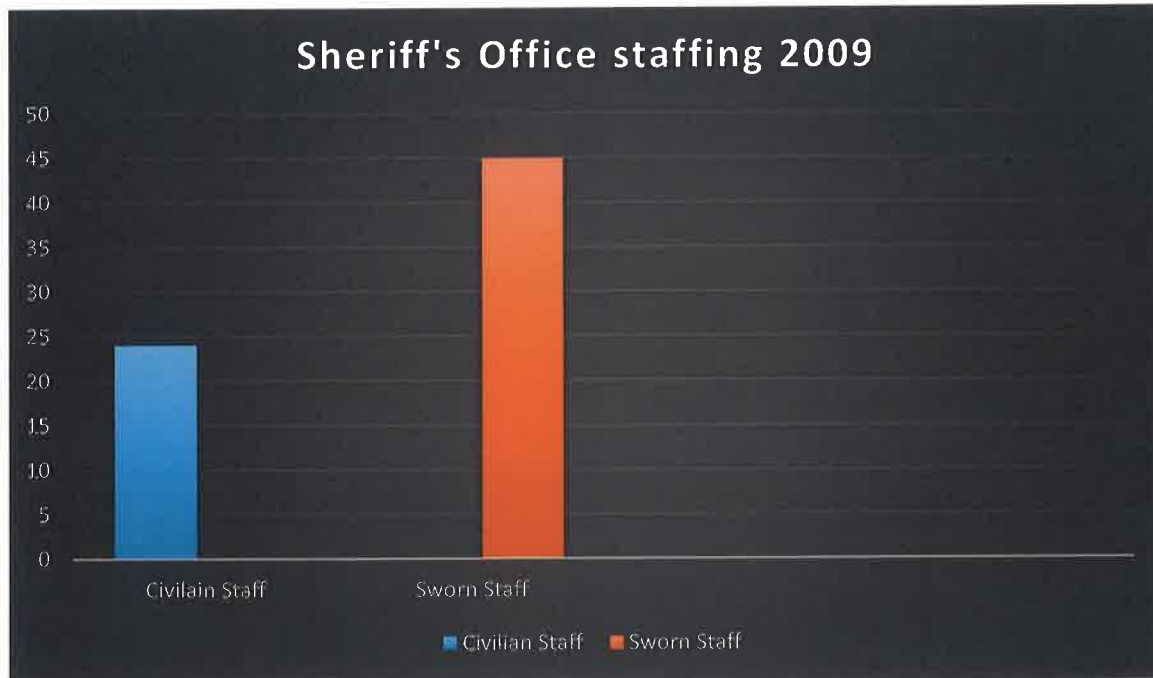
The Sheriff's Office staffing is still below 2009 levels. The Sheriff's Office has never recovered from the devastating layoffs suffered in 2009 and 2010. In 2009, six civilian and one part time deputy position were laid off. In 2010, ten deputies were laid off. In 2011, all county office holders were told by the Board of County Commissioners, to prepare for 12% cuts based on their total expenditures in 2011. In 2012, three deputy positions could not be filled due to the 12 % cut, which amounted to \$361,765.00. In the past six years, there have been only five new deputies hired. As a result, the Sheriff's Office would still need seven more deputies to get back to its 2010 authorized staffing levels. For 2016, Patton requested five deputy positions, but only one position was authorized in his 2016 budget. In addition, the Sheriff's Office lost a public safety officer (PSO) position when Dover, Claibourne, and Jackson Townships did not renew their PSO contract at the end of December 2015. Public safety officers are cross trained deputy sheriff's that work under contract in certain areas of the county to provide supplemental coverage to the regular patrol deputy staff. It is now six years after the layoffs, with more residents, more businesses, more crime, more calls for service, more traffic, more drugs, and no replacement staffing to handle these public safety issues. Replacing seven deputies will only bring the Sheriff's Office back to its 2010 staffing levels. It does not take into consideration staff that should have been added over the past six years. "We are playing catch up and will be for years to come. As the Chief Law Enforcement Officer in Union County, it's my responsibility to make it very clear what the public safety needs are in the county and the resources I need to keep our community safe", said Patton.

"At the end of their day, whether it's 7:00 am, 3:00 pm, or 11:00 pm, I want all of our staff to go home safe. I also want the people of Union County to receive good customer service from their Sheriff's Office. It really becomes a quality of life issue. Our community is growing by leaps and bounds and we are not keeping up. We cannot sustain an acceptable level of service without an increase in manpower and I think that if we can't keep the community safe, it will reduce the desire of others to make Union County their home", concluded Patton.



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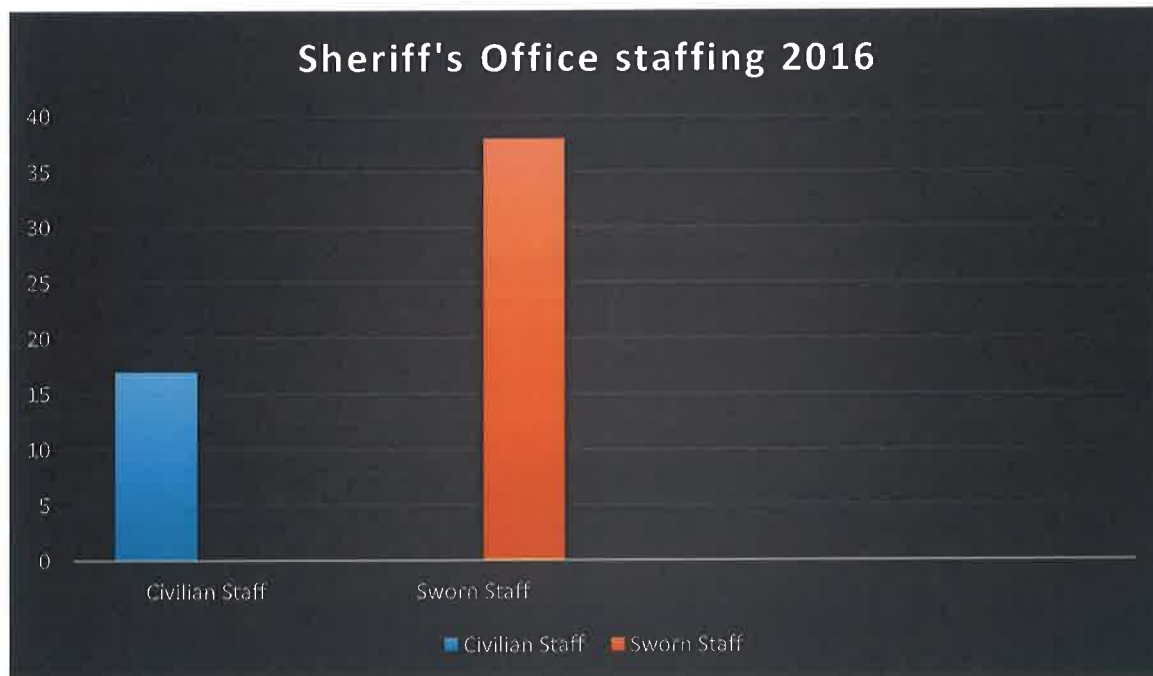
Malcum J. Patton, Sheriff



#### **2009 Staffing**

Civilian employees = 24

Sworn Deputies = 45



#### **2016 Staffing**

Civilian Employees = 17

Sworn Deputies = 38